

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

Contact: Janet Bancroft | (402) 471-3730 | jhammer@nsc.state.ne.us

September 18 Proclamation Will Kick Off Lancaster County's Juror Appreciation Week Activities

At noon on September 18, 2006 – National Constitution Day – on the steps of the County City building, Mayor Colleen Seng will sign a proclamation declaring September 18 through 22, Juror Appreciation Week for Lancaster County. The proclamation will be presented to District Court Judge Steven Burns and County Court Judge Laurie Yardley. Justice John Gerrard of the Nebraska Supreme Court will host the ceremony.

The proclamation signing ceremony is part of a statewide campaign undertaken by lawyers and judges to thank jurors for their contribution to the justice system and to promote the representation of people from every ethnicity, race, religion and economic background on Nebraska juries. Jury duty is based on the idea that a jury is the best judge of an individual's actions; this is why it is important that juries are reflective of the communities they represent.

In addition to the ceremony, educational materials will be disseminated to high schools and organizations throughout the community. A radio campaign promoting jury service will be played in the Lincoln area in English and Spanish, and "law day" events will be held at several of Lincoln's minority community centers (Malone Center - September 19 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.; Hispanic Community and Asian Community Centers - September 20 from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.) Events at the centers include:

- A free legal clinic where volunteer attorneys will be on hand to answer legal questions.
- Information about jury service and an opportunity to register to vote.
- Information about applying to and attending law school.
- Information on careers in the court system.

An important part of raising community awareness is educating new Americans about the jury system of justice. For many new Americans, receiving a letter from the court often creates feelings of suspicion or fear, especially if the summons is served by local law enforcement. By providing the community with educational materials about jury service,

the campaign hopes to increase public trust and confidence in the justice system, especially among its newest citizens.

For those who have not yet had the opportunity to serve on a jury, please remember:

- Respond to your jury summons. If you do not respond to a jury summons, it can result in a forceful summons to the court by the sheriff and a fine.
- Tell your employer right away that you've been called to serve. State law prohibits your employer from penalizing you. You cannot be fired, loose pay (except for that your employer may reduce your pay by the \$35 per day that you receive for jury duty), lose sick leave, or lose vacation time.
- Answer all questions you are asked—honestly and completely.
- Don't take it personally if you are not selected as a juror for a trial. Lawyers have many reasons for not choosing an individual for a jury. Not being selected does not imply that you lack ability or honesty.
- Please arrive on time. A trial cannot begin or continue until everyone is present.
- If there is something you don't understand, ask the judge or other court personnel for clarification.
- During deliberations, respect the opinions of your fellow jurors.
- Expect to get paid. Nebraska jurors are paid \$35 per day of service.

Additional Contacts:

Liz Neeley, Director, Minority Justice Task Force Implementation Committee (402) 475-7091

Linda Crump, Co-Chair Minority Justice Task Force Implementation Committee (402) 472-3417

Judge Steven Burns, Lancaster County District Court (402) 441-7605

Judge Laurie Yardley, Lancaster County Court (402) 441-8741

#

Janice Walker, State Court Administrator
Administrative Office of the Courts | P. O. Box 98910 | Lincoln, NE 68509-8910